United Nations E/AC.51/1999/L.6/Add.43

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
30 June 1999

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Thirty-ninth session
7 June–2 July 1999

Draft report

Addendum

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Coordination questions: implementation of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (item 5 (b))

1. At its 8th and 9th meetings, on 10 June 1999, the Committee considered the progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (E/AC.51/1999/6).

Discussion

2. The overall reaction to the report, in terms of its content and analysis, was encouraging. The view was expressed that it addressed the critical priority areas of African development, including the two areas of regional cooperation and integration and economic diversification which were not covered in the previous year's report. It also dealt with the specific recommendations made by the Committee with regard to the need for better coordination. However, it was felt that the quality of the report could have been enhanced by including the lessons learned and the constraints faced in each of the priority areas.

3. The need was stressed for African countries to identify their development priorities and to be fully involved in the process of global partnership. In that regard, national ownership of the Special Initiative should be promoted. It was also stated that African countries must define their own priorities and programmes and that African efforts at addressing their problems should be highlighted and supported by the international

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community. While the experiences of other developing countries were instructive, sharing and disseminating those experiences among African countries should be encouraged.

4. A view was expressed that the Special Initiative had the role of catalyst, generating new projects, many of which were under execution.

5. Concern was expressed that the number of countries targeted under the programme of the Special Initiative was limited. Emphasis was placed upon the need to increase the number of countries and the priority areas to be covered.

6. The view was also expressed that, at the outset, the Secretary-General's report should have shown the linkage between the Special Initiative and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, given the fact that the Special Initiative was an implementing arm of the New Agenda. Furthermore, the view was expressed that the report should have shown the link between the priority areas of the New Agenda and the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa,[1] and in that regard it was stressed that issues of conflict resolution, good governance and development needed to be accorded great priority. The view was also expressed that future reports should explicitly highlight the congruence of the objectives of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa with those of the Cairo Agenda for Action for relaunching Africa's economic and social development as well as the operational link between the Special Initiative and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. It was also noted that the functional linkage between the Special Initiative and organizations of the United Nations system should be examined so as to provide more convincing evidence of the value added of the Initiative.

7. As regards the priority area of health, it was felt that the focus on HIV/AIDS masked the adverse impact on the health of the African populations of other diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis, which were claiming many more lives than the pandemic. The view was also expressed that African efforts at the local and national levels to address the problems of health needed to be highlighted.

8. Concern was expressed over the limited progress achieved in the area of poverty eradication in Africa. Since poverty eradication, an important objective of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, was critical for achieving development, it should have been the priority of the United Nations programmes in Africa, and poverty reduction the main performance indicator of progress achieved in the Special Initiative. Similarly, no tangible results had been achieved in food security. Enhanced implementation of those two areas was therefore required. It was also pointed out that much more needed to be done in the area of economic diversification.

9. Concern was also expressed regarding the lack of concrete actions in the priority areas under the Special Initiative, as the emphasis seemed to be on meetings, workshops and similar forums. Thus, more concrete actions were called for and in that regard it was felt that some of the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on Africa could be used as a basis for defining those concrete activities.

10. The need was voiced for increased access to trade opportunities if Africa was not to be marginalized in the global economy. The view was expressed that, while African economies needed to be made competitive vis-à-vis other countries, increased access to the markets of developed countries and trade opportunities was equally important.

11. The importance of resource availability in implementing the priority areas of the Initiative was underscored. Concern was expressed that little progress had been made under the Initiative with regard to resource mobilization. That issue should receive further attention

from the international community. It was noted with concern that the heavy debt burden of African countries was siphoning resources away from critical development activities. In that respect, it was proposed that the conditions for the countries to qualify for relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative should be relaxed to enable more countries to benefit from the Initiative. With respect to critical issues pertaining to African development, such as debt and trade, reference should be made to recent regional African and global conferences as well as the Ministerial Statement issued by the recently concluded Joint Conference of African Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Economic Development, as well as the Ministerial Communiqué of the High-level Segment of the Economic and Social Council on market access: developments since the Uruguay Round[2] and General Assembly resolution 53/174 of 15 December 1998 on commodities.

12. It was noted with satisfaction that the coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions had improved but it was also stressed that more needed to be done to increase the involvement of those institutions in the overall coordination of development assistance to Africa. Such comprehensive involvement required close consultation in the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the active participation of the leadership of the Bretton Woods institutions. The need to strengthen coordination and collaboration among bilateral, multilateral and regional and subregional initiatives was emphasized.

13. Concern was expressed about potential duplication owing to the existence of two secretariats within the United Nations system — the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries and the secretariat of the Special Initiative. The Committee noted with appreciation the close collaboration between the Office of the Special Coordinator and the secretariat of the System-wide Special Initiative.

14. Nevertheless, it was noted with concern that some proposals on performance indicators contained in annex IV to the Secretary-General's report related to governance-included elements that had not been approved by the relevant intergovernmental bodies and that they did not address the African reality. The Committee also noted that the proposals on performance indicators related to economic diversification, regional cooperation, resource mobilization and poverty eradication did not include elements that could measure the concrete actions to be taken to improve the situation in Africa in the economic areas.

15. On performance indicators for monitoring progress in the implementation of the Special Initiative, it was felt that the matter should be addressed carefully and cautiously as it was a relatively new area and was still being considered in other forums. The view was expressed that the performance indicators should be further refined to match the configuration of all African countries, taking into consideration the need for flexibility and adaptation to the reality and specificity of each country.

16. The Committee noted that the proposals related to performance indicators requested by the Committee on the issue had not been approved by the General Assembly.

17. The view was expressed that partnership with Africa through South-South cooperation should be enhanced and that the United Nations should play an increased and supportive role in that respect. In particular, the importance of support to the South Centre was stressed.

18. With a view to the goal of making the Special Initiative fully operational before its mid-term review as well as the final review of the United Nations Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, especially at the national level, the importance of monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee was stressed. In that regard, the Committee welcomed the matrix contained in annex III to the report, which could be improved by adding a fourth column on action taken by the agencies.

Conclusions and recommendations

19. The Committee took note of the progress report of the Secretary-General and of the results achieved in the Special Initiative and commended the improvement in quality over the previous year's report. The Committee noted with concern the limited number of countries covered by the Initiative and called for greater coverage of countries. It noted and endorsed the elaboration of the two programmes on diversification and regional cooperation and integration by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

20. The Committee noted the progress achieved in coordination at the country, subregional and regional levels and welcomed the establishment of the annual regional coordination meeting of organizations of the United Nations system working in the continent and the utilization of the Special Initiative as a coordinating mechanism. The Committee further noted with appreciation the active involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions in the implementation of the Special Initiative and the resulting enhanced coordination between the organizations of the United Nations and those institutions. The Committee took note of the innovative resource mobilization strategy outlined at the meeting jointly organized in October 1998 by the World Bank and the secretariat of the Special Initiative and formulated in a report to the Co-Chairs of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Steering Committee on the Special Initiative.

21. The Committee requested that a resource mobilization strategy together with the concrete action plan be submitted to the Committee for consideration at its fortieth session in 2000.

22. While welcoming the emphasis on improving Africa's trade competitiveness in the priority area of trade access and opportunities, the Committee requested that activities be also implemented on opportunities to access markets and that such activities be reflected in the next progress report.

23. The Committee noted the matrix prepared by the Secretariat in follow-up to and implementation of its recommendations and requested that such a matrix be improved by adding a fourth column indicating actions taken and submitted to it together with future progress reports.

24. The Committee took note with appreciation of the closer collaboration between the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries, the Economic Commission for Africa and the secretariat of the Special Initiative and requested those entities to work closely on the harmonization of the various initiatives on Africa, especially on enhancing the linkages and common elements among the Special Initiative, the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, the Cairo Agenda for Action for relaunching Africa's economic and social development, the Tokyo Agenda for Action, on the one hand, and the other multilateral and bilateral initiatives on the other.

25. The Committee called upon the lead agencies of the various clusters of the Special Initiative to be represented at the highest appropriate level at its future meetings on the Special Initiative, in order to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

26. The Committee recommended the acceleration of the Special Initiative by the extending of support to as many countries or regions as possible that may require funding in those activities that have a direct impact at the field level.

27. The Committee requested that its comments be reported to the Economic and Social Council's coordination segment on Africa to be held at Geneva in July 1999.

28. The Committee requested that a progress report on the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, including measures taken in response to the foregoing recommendations of the Committee, be submitted to it for consideration at its fortieth session in 2000.

Notes

[1] A/52/871.

[2] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/53/3), chap. IV.